

114TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 4352

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program establishing a patient self-scheduling appointment system, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 8, 2016

Mr. MOULTON (for himself and Mrs. McMORRIS RODGERS) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program establishing a patient self-scheduling appointment system, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Faster Care for Vet-
5 erans Act of 2016”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) In June 2014 an internal audit conducted
9 by the Department of Veterans Affairs found more

1 than 120,000 veterans waited at least 90 days for
2 appointments for medical care or never received ap-
3 pointments.

4 (2) One year later, and despite handling more
5 appointments than in previous years, reports indi-
6 cate that the number of veterans waiting 30 days or
7 more for medical care has increased by 50 percent.

8 (3) In 2008, the Inspector General of the De-
9 partment estimated that 18 percent of outpatient
10 appointment slots went unfilled because of patient
11 no-shows or because facility personnel did not refill
12 canceled appointments.

13 (4) Wait times are not unique to the Depart-
14 ment of Veterans Affairs. The average wait time in
15 the private sector is more than 18 days, but private
16 sector hospitals and health systems are now
17 leveraging technology to eliminate wait times and
18 ensure every available appointment is used.

19 (5) In June 2015 the Institute of Medicine
20 called for a patient-oriented scheduling platform that
21 allows patients to self-schedule care online at any
22 time.

1 **SEC. 3. PILOT PROGRAM ESTABLISHING A PATIENT SELF-**
2 **SCHEDULING APPOINTMENT SYSTEM.**

3 (a) PILOT PROGRAM.—Not later than 120 days after
4 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of
5 Veterans Affairs shall commence a pilot program under
6 which veterans use an Internet website to schedule and
7 confirm medical appointments at medical facilities of the
8 Department of Veterans Affairs.

9 (b) SELECTION OF LOCATIONS.—The Secretary shall
10 select not less than three Veterans Integrated Services
11 Networks in which to carry out the pilot program under
12 subsection (a).

13 (c) CONTRACTS.—

14 (1) AUTHORITY.—The Secretary shall seek to
15 enter into a contract with one or more contractors
16 to provide the scheduling capability described in sub-
17 section (a).

18 (2) NOTICE OF COMPETITION.—Not later than
19 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act,
20 the Secretary shall issue a request for proposals for
21 the contract described in paragraph (1). Such re-
22 quest shall be full and open to any contractor that
23 is able to meet the criteria under paragraph (3).

24 (3) SELECTION OF VENDORS.—Not later than
25 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act,
26 the Secretary shall award a contract with one or

1 more contractors that have an existing commercially
2 available online patient self-scheduling capability
3 that—

4 (A) allows patients to self-schedule, con-
5 firm, and modify outpatient and specialty care
6 appointments in real time through an Internet
7 website;

8 (B) makes available, in real time, any ap-
9 pointments that were previously filled but later
10 canceled by other patients; and

11 (C) allows patients to use the online sched-
12 uling capability 24 hours a day, seven days a
13 week.

14 (4) INTEGRATION WITH EXISTING INFRASTRUC-
15 TURE.—The Secretary shall ensure that a contractor
16 awarded a contract under this section is able to inte-
17 grate the online scheduling capability of the con-
18 tractor with the Veterans Health Information Sys-
19 tems and Technology Architecture of the Depart-
20 ment.

21 (d) DURATION OF PILOT PROGRAM.—

22 (1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided by para-
23 graph (2), the Secretary shall carry out the pilot
24 program under subsection (a) for an 18-month pe-
25 riod.

1 (2) EXTENSION.—The Secretary may extend
2 the duration of the pilot program under subsection
3 (a), and may expand the selection of Veterans Inte-
4 grated Services Networks under subsection (b), if
5 the Secretary determines that the pilot program is
6 reducing the wait times of veterans seeking medical
7 care and ensuring that more available appointment
8 times are filled.

9 (e) REPORT.—Not later than one year after com-
10 mencing the pilot program under subsection (a), the Sec-
11 retary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs
12 of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report
13 on the outcomes of the pilot program, including—

14 (1) whether the pilot program demonstrated—

15 (A) improvements to the ability of veterans
16 to schedule medical appointments; and

17 (B) a reduction in wait times for such
18 medical appointments; and

19 (2) any recommendations of the Secretary for
20 expanding the pilot program to additional Veterans
21 Integrated Services Networks.

22 (f) USE OF FUNDS OTHERWISE APPROPRIATED.—
23 No additional funds are authorized to be appropriated to
24 carry out the pilot program under subsection (a) and such
25 pilot program shall be carried out using amounts other-

- 1 wise made available to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs
- 2 for the medical support and compliance account of the
- 3 Veterans Health Administration.

